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ABSTRACT

Farm and home visits are an essential part of extension education. The U. S. Department of Agriculture has provided these guidelines for extension and village workers for implementing a successful extension workers program. The topics covered are: (1) the reasons for the visit, (2) types of visit (public relations, service, teaching, organization, and informational), (3) whom to visit, (4) how to plan and prepare for the visit, (5) what you should do on the actual visit itself, (6) how to record the visit, and (7) followup visit procedures. The guide then concludes with a two-page illustrative case study, sample copies of the visit record, and evaluation sheets. (BP)

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# FARM AND HOME VISITS

## A Guide for Extension and Village Workers

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U.S. Department of Agriculture,
in Cooperation with
Agency for International Development,
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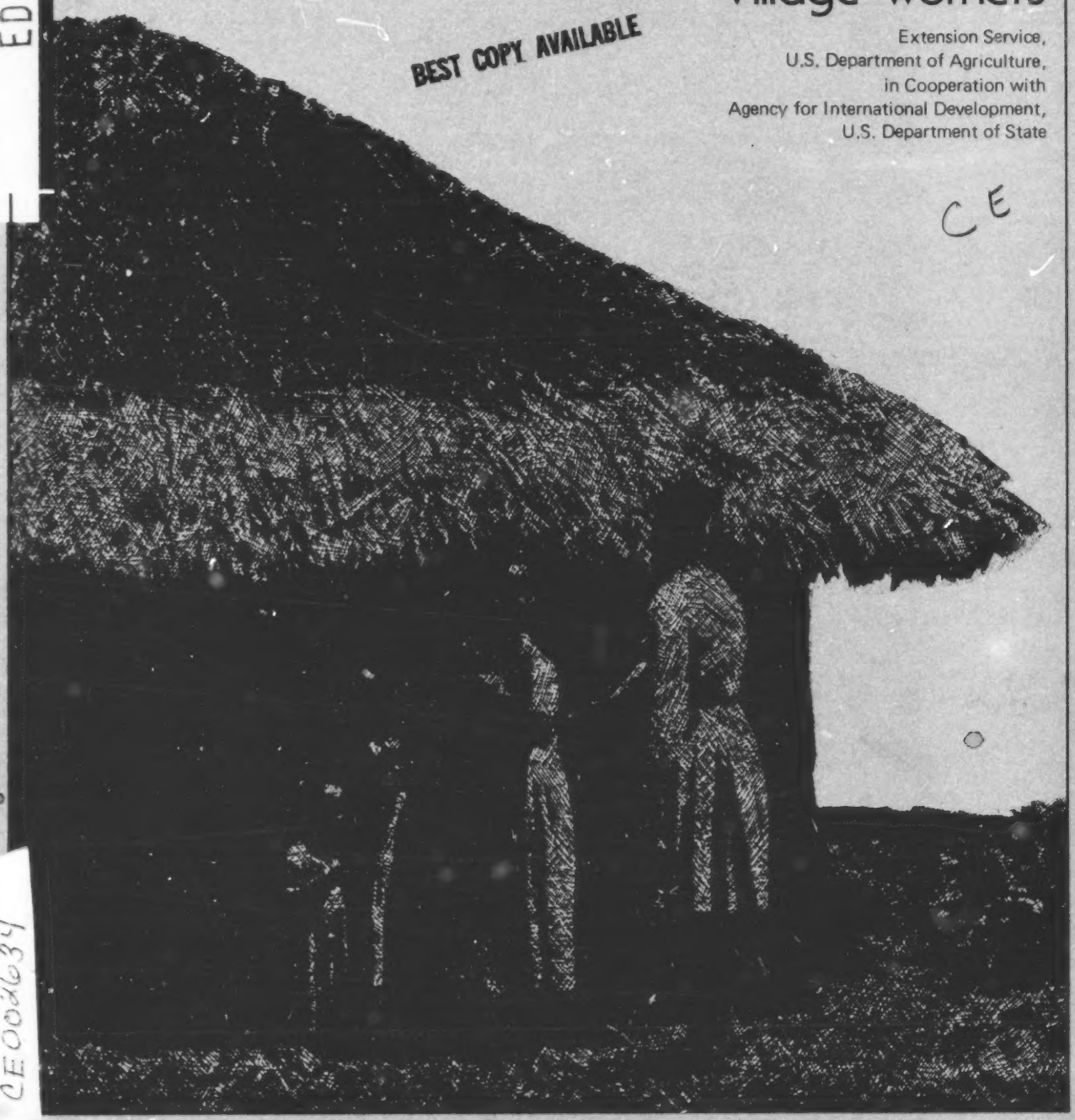

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By Sue Murry, Educational Specialist, International; Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture

*Photo credits: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Agency for International Development.*

*Cover photo: A home agent in Kenya greets a farmer's wife with a friendly smile. Her warm greeting helps the homemaker understand that she is a friend who wants to help.*

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# FARM AND HOME VISITS

## A Guide for Extension and Village Workers

**FARM AND HOME VISITS ARE IMPORTANT**

Reasons for a Visit
- Advantages
- Disadvantages

Types of Visits

Whom to Visit

**PLAN AND PREPARE FOR THE VISIT**

The Visit

Record the Visit
- Farm and home visit record

**AFTER THE VISIT**

- Follow up the visit
- Evaluate the visit
- How successful was the visit?

In Summary

Appendix

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## FARM AND HOME VISITS ARE IMPORTANT

All extension workers visit farm homes. They have to. Farm and home visits are an essential part of successful extension work. They are needed to gain the confidence of farm families and to secure their friendship and cooperation. They are especially important where local people do not understand the value of educational programs, where they are unaccustomed to group meetings, or where women cannot meet in public.

As an extension worker, you try to reach all the people in your area. This takes many different methods. While it is not possible to reach as many people with individual visits as it is with other methods, there are many times when only a personal visit will do the job. Words can be misunderstood, but there is no mistaking a friendly smile, real understanding, or a helping hand.

You know families must like you or they will not accept your suggestions. You cannot rush the process of getting acquainted. You must understand local customs and the amenities of visits. The success of your visit may depend upon your sharing a cup of tea with the family, for instance.

In beginning extension work, remember that the people do not think of the program as *"theirs."* It is the government's or the extension worker's program. It is their village, their home, their way of life. But it is your program. You have to earn acceptance for yourself and your ideas, so that eventually the program becomes *theirs.* Try to discover what the families are most interested in and what they feel they need. Successful extension work starts where people are and helps them to help themselves.

Village families generally have many problems, such as poor crops, small incomes, inadequate diets, and sick babies. They may not even be aware of their most basic ones. While they know the baby is sick, they may not know that the wrong kind of food could be one of the causes. They may know that they don't have much money, but not that improved practices could increase the yield of their little cotton or maize crop and thereby increase their income. A farm and home visit is a good way to discover which basic needs the families recognize and which you must teach them to recognize.

Getting them interested in their basic but unrecognized problems may require many visits and many methods. A farmer may tell you of a blight that ruins a crop. Parents may tell you of problems with their children—a sick baby, a child who won't eat. These would easily tie in with the family's basic needs. However, the expressed needs might be much more superficial, for example, how to make a pretty pair of earrings, or a picture for the wall.

You must realize that those expressed or felt needs can be the place to start with a farmer or his family. Such a start should quickly lead to more basic needs which they may not yet have recognized. Inexperienced workers often continue these "interest projects" too long and fail to help with fundamental problems.

## REASONS FOR A VISIT

Here are some specific purposes for making a visit. There are many others.

- To get acquainted.
- To develop friendship and understanding.
- To secure interest, cooperation, support, and assistance.
- To get facts.
- To give information.
- To learn the family's interests and needs.
- To give assistance or advice on a "felt need."
- To create awareness of and interest in an "unfelt need."
- To teach a skill or practice.
- To plan and establish a result demonstration.
- To observe improved practices.
- To follow up after a meeting.
- To change attitudes.
- To find and develop leaders.
- To encourage discouraged homemakers' club or youth club members.
- To arrange a meeting.

Before determining the emphasis to place upon farm and home visits, weigh the strong and weak points of this method of teaching.

**Advantages**

1. Gives you first hand knowledge of problems of the farmer and his family which you cannot get as well by any other method.

2. Is one of the most effective teaching methods because you are dealing with problems where they occur.
3. It gives the people an opportunity to know you as a friend and not just as a government worker.
4. Helps you to locate leaders and cooperators.
5. It stimulates interest in other phases of the program.
6. You can contact those who do not participate in other extension activities.

**Disadvantages**

1. Uses a large amount of your time.
2. The number of families you can reach is limited.
3. You cannot always make a visit at a time that is most convenient for the family.
4. Neighbors not visited may be disappointed and accuse you of favoritism.
5. You may find it difficult to avoid visiting some farmers and their families more often than others.

*Helping a woman with her work is a good way to put her at ease on your first visit to her home. Here a Turkish home agent helps a village woman do her washing while they get acquainted.*

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*This Brazilian extension agent carries a first aid kit when she makes a home visit. This helps her teach families what to do if someone has an accident.*

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## TYPES OF VISITS

The farm and home visit serves several purposes. Broadly speaking, visits are made to get and give information. They can be classified as follows:

1. *Public Relations Visits* – are to get acquainted and to explain extension work. A person-to-person visit is often the most useful beginning in a village where extension work is just getting started.

2. *Service Visits* – are to help with a specific problem, usually in answer to a request from the farmer or homemaker. For example, Mr. Sadik sends word that a vine is winding itself around his maize and killing it. He wants you to come to his farm and tell him what to do. You are familiar with that area and you know this vine. You take a spray gun and the new weed killer furnished by the government and go to Mr. Sadik's farm to teach him how to spray his maize to kill the vine. Mr. Sadik had an acute problem and wanted you to give him a quick remedy. You did.

3. *Teaching Visits* – are part of your extension educational program. Mrs. Hudan says she needs to know how to make a pair of pants for her little boy. You visit her home to teach her how to cut and sew the pants. Mr. Perez has a small flock of chickens that he wants to improve. You recommend culling the hens. Mr. Perez has never heard of this. You visit his farm and show him how. Both of these visits are made to teach a practice or skill.

4. *Organizational Visits* – are made to plan and establish a result demonstration, to plan for a meeting, to secure new local leaders, or to organize an advisory committee. For example, you feel that village families would be better nourished if they grew and ate tomatoes. No one now grows tomatoes. You know that both soil and climate are favorable. You realize a demonstration is needed to prove that tomatoes will grow and that the people will like them.

So, you visit the Sen-Li family. You discuss the tomato project with them and ask if they would like to help you show their neighbors that tomatoes will grow and that they are good to eat. You show the Sen-Lis how to prepare the seed box and plant the seed. When the plants are ready to set, you make another visit and teach the Sen-Lis how to select a good place to set the plants, how to dig the holes in straight rows, how to water, set, and shade the plants. You demonstrate each step. Then you help them plan to invite the neighbors to come see the plants and how they are put into the ground. As the plants grow, you teach other practices such as weeding, hoeing, pruning, and dusting, right on to the harvest and how to prepare tomatoes as food.

5. *Informational Visits* – are generally made to get information. You may make a survey to get specific information on how many families are carrying water from the river for family use. Or you may wish to learn how a farmer is getting along using the new plow he just bought. You may wish to find out if a homemaker is having trouble preparing powdered milk for her baby the way you demonstrated in last week's meeting.

A visit may be any one or a combination of the above types. All types are common in extension work. Each visit should have a clear purpose. Know why you are making it and what you want to accomplish.

## WHOM TO VISIT

An effective extension worker must reach many people. There can be no set formula for deciding which families to visit and how often. Farm and home visits must fit into your total teaching program.

When you begin an extension program, you may find it helpful to visit all or as many families in the area as possible. But, as your program progresses and increases, you will not be able to continue this. You know the local situation. *Only you can decide which families need visits the most!*

When deciding which families to visit, remember the people in the village and the ways in which they vary. In each village there are:

1. People who are eager to try a new way, who accept or seek help.
2. People who are natural leaders that others trust.
3. People who will only follow

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what others do.

4. People who are reluctant to change and must be persuaded.
5. People who do not like to change at all.

Visit a variety of people—those who are eager to learn and those who are slow to change. Don't fall into the habit of visiting only your friends. Remember, your responsibility is to help all the people.

## PLAN AND PREPARE FOR THE VISIT

Like other teaching methods, a successful visit must be planned and prepared for. You lose valuable time by "just dropping in." Too often, visits are simply "talks" with the family because of lack of preparation.

Some of the more important steps you should take to plan and prepare for a visit are:

1. Decide exactly why you are going and what you are going to do.
2. Decide if this visit fits into your plan of work and where.
3. Decide if you have other visits to make in this same area that you could include on the same trip.

*Some visits are made to teach a specific lesson. These extension agents in Ecuador are showing a farmer how he can grow a better crop of sorghum.*

*Extension agricultural and home agents often work together to help an entire family. These agents are helping a Brazilian farmer and his wife plan how they will use credit on the farm.*

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4. Review what you know about the family. Learn the names of family members.
5. Decide which methods you will use to accomplish your objectives.
6. Determine what teaching materials you will need and get them ready.
7. Time your visit so you won't inconvenience the family.
8. If you can, tell the family when you will come.

Demonstrations, visual aids, posters, charts, pictures, or models are as important in making a good farm and home visit as they are in a group meeting. An agricultural worker may need such things as a sharp pocket knife, hammer, small saw, pruning shears, handsprayer, and bulletins on appropriate farm practices. A home economics worker may need pictures, charts, sewing samples, and small models of simple home improvements such as a cupboard, mattress, or improved cooking utensils.

Be prepared to deal with the unexpected. Keep a kit of useful materials ready to take on all visits.

## THE VISIT

On your first visit, you must be especially observant. Be careful of the questions you ask. Do not ask too many or ask them too rapidly.

Whenever it is possible and in keeping with local custom, discuss problems with both the men and the women. This can estab-

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lish effective working relationships with the family.

Make the visit pleasant. Remember, you are a guest.

Start the conversation about family members and their activities. Call them by name.

Be informal and let the family talk. Be a good listener and a close observer. Be interested in what family members have to say.

Be friendly, sympathetic, and always find something to praise. Every family has pride, and praise generally brings a positive response.

Render service when it is needed and wanted, and make it educational.

What you learn from the family is a secret. Never repeat it to others.

Before you leave, make sure both you and the family clearly understand the purpose of your visit and any action either of you has agreed to take. Writing down such plans and promises is a good way to help you and the family remember.

Avoid wasting your time and the time of the family. End your visit when you accomplish what you came for.

Be sure you show you appreciate the chance to meet the family and visit their home.

## RECORD THE VISIT

To make farm and home visits as effective as possible, you should record each visit soon after you make it. This will help you remember details about the family and their situation.

It is generally wise not to make written notes while you are at the home, except to write down things you promise to do. Stop along the road later and write down what you learned. Use a form like that on page 10 to record each visit you make.

## AFTER THE VISIT

**Follow up the visit**

Send any material or information you promised as promptly as you can. Invite the family to attend any pertinent meetings to be held in their area. If you promised a return visit, go back when you said you would.

**Evaluate the visit**

How do you feel about the visit you have made? Think it over. To learn how you could have done better, ask yourself the following questions. This will help you to improve your future visits. (See form on page 11.)

## IN SUMMARY

Farm and home visits are an essential part of extension education. They are effective and worthwhile if:

- A visit is the best method for the job.
- You have a definite purpose.
- You plan the visit carefully.
- You are friendly, understanding, and sympathetic.
- You gain the family's confidence.
- You usually tell them you are coming.
- You help them analyze their problems.and make their own decisions.
- You leave when your work is done.
- You follow up.

*Remember:*

- Visit those families who need a visit the most.
- If other methods will do the job as well, use them.

## APPENDIX

The following case study illustrates some techniques of a productive visit:

Miss Santos, the local home agent, is visiting the Juan Perez family. The Perez family is very poor. They live on only 3 hectares of land (about 7½ acres).

There are five children. Roberto, 15, and Maria, 13, are 4-H Club members. Roberto has a goat project and Maria, a garden project.

On a previous visit, Miss Santos worked with Maria and Mrs. Perez in the garden, showing them how to thin the carrots, dust the beans, and transplant the cabbage. They had never grown these vegetables before. Miss Santos promised to come back to show Mrs. Perez and Maria how to cook the vegetables. This is the visit she is now making.

Before her visit, Miss Santos reviewed the family's situation

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Farm and home visit record

Name Address Date

Family members Ages

I. The Visit

1. What I planned to do.
2. What I accomplished.
3. What the family agreed to do.
4. What I promised to do for followup.

II. The Situation:
Special problems Special interests

III. Materials or information promised.

IV. Proposed date of next visit.

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I. *Preparation for the visit* — *Yes/No*

- Did I have a definite purpose for making this visit? _____
- Was a visit the most effective and efficient way? _____
- Was my visit properly timed (convenient for the farmer or homemaker, and seasonal)? _____
- Did the person I visited expect me? _____
- Was I organized for the visit? Did I have the pertinent information and necessary materials? _____
- Did this visit tie in with other methods in my plan of work? _____

II. *The visit*

- Was the visit pleasant, friendly? _____
- Did I use tact? Did I avoid arguments? _____
- Will the assistance I gave influence or help others carry out the same practices? _____
- Did I accomplish my purpose? _____
- Were my appearance and actions appropriate? _____
- Was the visit free from distractions? _____
- Did I stay long enough, but not too long? _____
- Did I show appreciation for my host's time? _____
- Was the family's general reaction good? _____
- Is any followup required? _____

III. *Followup*

- Did I record the visit? _____
- Did I do what I promised? _____
- Was my followup prompt and adequate? _____

IV. How would I change my plans and approach if I were making this visit again? _____

_____

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*Many extension agents make farm and home visits because someone asks for help with a problem. This sheepherder in Libya wanted to know why his lambs were getting sick.*

and the major problems she would discuss with them. She collected appropriate bulletins, posters, and slides to help Mrs. Perez and Maria understand the importance of eating vegetables, and how to cook them.

Even though Mrs. Perez cannot read, the bulletins are so well illustrated that she can get information from them. Maria helps by reading recipes for vegetable dishes she thinks her family would like. These recipes use seasonings the family likes and is accustomed to using.

Since Mrs. Perez often works mornings in the field, Miss Santos scheduled her visit for the afternoon. To save time and expense, she also visited three other families living nearby, on the same day. She asked the agricultural agent if he had any information or business she could take up with the families to save him a trip.

When she arrived at the Perez home, Miss Santos found that 3-year-old Tomas had cut his foot on a piece of glass. It was bleeding badly. Mrs. Perez had applied dried tobacco leaves to the cut and bandaged it with a soiled colored rag, but the child was still crying. Mrs. Perez asked if there were something else she could do.

Miss Santos asked for a clean piece of white cloth, washed and boiled it, and hung it in the hot sun to dry. She then showed Mrs. Perez how to wash the cut with boiled water to get it clean and how to bandage it tightly with the clean cloth to stop the bleeding. She gave the mother instructions on caring for the cut and told her to take the child to the

doctor at once if the foot became red or painful.

Miss Santos took advantage of this splendid opportunity to discuss sanitation and neatness in and around the house by going into the yard with Mrs. Perez and Maria and pointing out how dangerous it was for the barefoot children to have broken glass, tin cans, and rusty nails lying about.

Once the emergency was taken care of, Miss Santos asked Mrs. Perez if she thought her two nearest neighbors might like to come over for a cooking lesson. They came at Maria's invitation. As the group gathered beans, cabbage, carrots, and beets, Miss Santos complimented Maria on her garden work and discussed cultivation practices. As they worked together in the kitchen, she discussed care and sanitation in preparing the vegetables.

Only the equipment Mrs. Perez had in her kitchen was used. Miss Santos knew that if she used kitchen utensils the women did not have, they might think they could not prepare the vegetables. She explained the importance of cooking vegetables in a small amount of water and suggested keeping the water for use in soup, the family's favorite dish.

She also showed the women how to test the beans with a fork to see if they were tender, and explained why they should not be cooked too long.

While the beans were cooking, the women prepared a raw salad of carrots and cabbage, using vinegar and a little cooking oil for dressing. Miss Santos was very careful that the women understood each step as they worked.

When the beans were done and taken from the pot, the beets were put in the same pot to cook. The beet tops were cooked at the same time in a tin pail. The women had never heard of cooking beet tops. When the beets were done, Miss Santos showed the women how to peel and dice them, add them to the cooked tops, and season them with salt, vinegar, oil, and native seasoning.

As the women were eating, Miss Santos reviewed what they had learned about gathering, washing, preparing, and cooking the vegetables, and told them why these vegetables were good for their health. She also went over the bulletins and other materials she had brought.

An incidental lesson in sanitation was given by washing the dishes in hot water and soap, and by suggesting that the vegetable garbage be fed to the animals instead of being thrown out the door as usual.

When Roberto came to milk the goat, Miss Santos had an opportunity to show how much cleaner the milk would be if the goat were milked from the side instead of the rear. Mrs. Perez complained that the milk was always souring quickly and that it really "never tasted good." Miss Santos asked the group if they would like to discuss milk and its care on her next visit. The women responded eagerly to this offer of help.

Before Miss Santos left, Mr. Perez came in from the field, so she asked him about his crops. He told her he was having trouble with corn borers. She offered to ask the agricultural agent to send him some information on how to control this pest.

This home visit was successful because the home agent:

- Had a definite purpose for the visit.
- Prepared for the visit and arranged her schedule to save time and expense.
- Was friendly and helpful.
- Found something to praise.
- Began with the existing situation and related her teaching to a definite need.
- Taught by showing how as well as telling.
- Got the group to participate.
- Made sure that the new practices were within reach of the family by using things they had.
- Created more interest in extension activities by getting the neighbors invited in.
- Reviewed and summarized to be sure the women understood what she taught.
- Planned the next visit on a felt need.
- Used the family approach.

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*People best remember what you teach when you actually show them how to do what you tell them about. This Philippine home agent is showing a farm woman and her daughter how to use the improved cooking area she helped them build.*



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